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THE
RISE OF MAHOMET,
ACCOUNTED FOR
ON
NATURAL AND CIVIL PRINCIPLES.

[Price One Shilling.]

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[Printed by G. Smith.]

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ON
NATURAL AND CIVIL
PRINCIPLES.

BY THE LATE
NATHAN ALCOCK, M. D.

IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF OXFORD AND LEYDEN, FELLOW OF
THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, AND OF THE
ROYAL SOCIETY, LONDON; AND IN THE FORMER UNI-
VERSITY, MANY YEARS CELEBRATED PRÆLECTOR IN
CHEMISTRY AND ANATOMY.

London:

Printed for G. SAEL, No. 192, Strand; and sold by
M. POOLE and SON, Chester.

1796.

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OF THE MUSEUM, WHERE HE WAS ASSISTANT IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY.

LONDON:

Printed for G. BAKER, No. 12, Strand; and sold by
W. BOOKE and SON, Chelsea.

1796.

TO THE
Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Chester.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordship being a known patron and able defender of the Christian religion, I may, without apology, take the liberty to present the following tract to your Notice. It was written by the late Doctor Alcock, my brother; and I think the publication of it (which he himself intended) may do some good. When clergymen write in favour of Christianity, their enemies are apt to say, they write only in the way of their trade, and that they are interested and partial advocates. A layman's thoughts are free from this objection, and his religious

compositions may be supposed to proceed from conviction and a love of truth. The treatise is in the Doctor's own hand writing. I have prefixed an Introduction, and made some small corrections and additions.

I am, My LORD,

With great esteem,

Your Lordship's most humble servant,

THOMAS ALCOCK,

Vicar of Runcorn in Cheshire.

EXTRACT

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER FROM DOCTOR ALCOCK TO HIS BROTHER, THE REV. MR. THOMAS ALCOCK, DATED AT OXFORD.

“ I HAVE lately added in the chapter,
“ *On the Effects of Warm Air*, a full
“ sheet, to account for the sudden rise and
“ prodigious progress of the Mahometan
“ empire and religion from the nature of
“ the climate, the character of the Arabians
“ and neighbouring nations resulting from
“ the climate, the particular circumstances
“ of

“ of the times, and the politic institu-
“ tions of the founder adapted to the cli-
“ mate and times.

“ I wish you could see this before it be
“ printed. I like it myself.”

ERRATUM.

Page 10. line xvi. for ἀνδραποδῆσαι read ἀνδραποδίσαι.

THE
RISE OF MAHOMET.

SOME part of Arabia was possessed soon after the Flood, by Cush, the son of Ham, and grandson of Noah; and some part afterwards by Joktan, the son of Eber, who was great grandson of Shem. The children of Joktan formed thirteen tribes; and these descendants of Ham and Shem may be called the Aborigines of the country.

Ishmael, the son of Abraham, by Hagar, being driven out from his father's house, by the jealousy and instigations of Sarah, retired into this country, where he begat twelve sons, who became the heads of twelve principal tribes, or cantons, in Arabia; and Mi-

EA B dian,

dian, the fourth son of Abraham, by Keturah, also seated himself in Arabia Petræa, on the borders of the Red Sea, where he built the city of Midian, and where Jethro, a wise and religious man, the father-in-law of Moses, became priest and prince. The Midianites and Ishmaelites being descended from a common stock, seem to have associated together as one people; for the Midianites are called Ishmaelites in the xxxviiith chap. of Genesis. The descendants of Hagar, the Hagarenes, were a branch of the same stock. These people traded through Palestine, to Gilead, in Syria; and carried back the commodities of those countries into Egypt and Arabia.* They also traded in men, *ανδραποδεις*, in the *slave-trade*, and bought Joseph of his brethren, and sold him to Potiphar, in Egypt.

A part of Arabia, lying to the south-east of Canaan, was rendered Ethiopia by the Septuagint, and called Oriental Ethiopia, to distinguish it from Ethiopia in Africa, towards the source of the Nile, and border-

* Genesis xxxviii.

ing on Abyssinia. Zipporah, the wife of Moses, a daughter of the priest of Midian, is said in the xiith chap. of Numbers, to be an Ethiopian woman. Candace, mentioned in the viiith chap. of Acts, was a queen, or princess of this eastern Ethiopia. The Ethiopians and Egyptians are spoken of as neighbouring nations, in the xxth of Isaiah.

The Arabians, particularly those that inhabited Arabia Petræa and Deserta, lived a scenite, or pastoral life, dwelling in tents, and shifting their habitations as pasturage and change of seasons required. The tents of Kedar, a son of Ishmael, are mentioned in Psalm cxx. as the tents of plunder and oppression. They led a predatory life, and made free with the property of travellers that passed through their country, and sometimes robbed one another. Uz, the land of Job, is justly supposed to have been situated on the south-east part of Arabia Deserta; for the Sabeans of Arabia Felix, from the south, *fell upon his oxen, as they were ploughing, and on the asses*, and took them away, and slew the servants that opposed them. Job. i.—And soon after, the Chaldeans, from the

B 2
north-

north-east of Arabia Deserta, fell upon the camels in three bands, and carried them off, and likewise killed the servants that resisted them.

The Sabeans are reckoned to be descended from Seba, or Sheba, the grandson of Abraham, by Keturah. *For Abraham gave gifts unto all the sons of his concubines, and sent them away from Isaac, eastward; from Beerseba unto the east country.** Some think that the Sabeans sprung from Saba, the eldest son of Cush.†

The twelve sons of Ishmael, and their offspring, in time dispersed themselves over a great part of Arabia, and formed the twelve principal tribes, or cantons, of that country. The Arabians, or Ishmaelites have always had the character of being addicted to pillaging and robbing, and they justify it by saying, that Abraham gave their father, Ishmael, no fortune, and therefore they must

* Genesis xxv.

† Genesis x.

take what they can catch.* And conformably to this idea, the Arabians, or some part of them were afterwards called Saracens, which certainly comes from the Hebrew or Arabic *Sarci*, a thief; in the plural *Sarcen*, or *Saracen*.

The Arabians had not much agriculture, at least not in the desert provinces; but they had, especially those of Arabia Felix, great herds of cattle, and a considerable trade in spices, sugar, gold, and precious stones. This appears from the complaint which the Lord makes to the Israelites, Jerem. vi. *To what purpose cometh to me frankincense from Sheba, or Saba, a province of Arabia Felix, and the sweet cane, the sugarcane from a far country?* And in the xxviiith chap. of Ezekiel it is said unto the great trading city, Tyre; *Ara-*

* Hence some derive Arab from the Hebrew ארב, *ane*, to lie in wait, to rob, according to that expression in Jeremiah iii. 2. *In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness.* Tanquam latro insidians in solitudine—as a thief lying in wait in the desert, according to the Vulgate. Others derive Arabia from ארבה *Hafabak*, with a *Hajip*, signifying a wild plain, or desert.

bia and all the Princes of Kiddar, occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats. And the merchants of Sheba traded in thy fairs, with chief of all spices, and with precious stones, and with gold. So in Psalm xxii. Unto him shall be given of the gold of Arabia, or Sheba. The concrete juice, or resin, called thus, frankincense, was particularly the produce of a tree of Sabea, where there were large groves of it.*

"India mittit Ebur, molles sua Thura Sabei."

VIRGIL. Georg. i.

Perfumes are much used in warm climates, and warm climates are most productive of them; and in them they are most required. They correct the noxious fumes of a copious perspiration, refresh the animal spirits, which are here soon exhausted, and prevent a putrescent state of the blood and juices, to which, in hot countries, the

* Kedar was the second son of Ishmael. Gen. xxv. And the Kedarenes, his descendants, were settled in the south-east part of Arabia Deserta. They lived an erratic life, and dwelt in tents. See Psalm cxx.

animal

animal fluids have a natural tendency. And as the Lord was to have his part in every thing that was good or agreeable to man, incense was introduced into religious offerings for a sweet-smelling favour, and to correct the foetor of the slaughtered victims.

Arabia is well guarded from invasion, by a ridge of high mountains, and sandy barren deserts, to the north, and to the north-east; by the river Euphrates and gulph of Bassora to the east; by the Indian Ocean to the south; and by the Red Sea to the west. Invasions and attacks by ships of war were unknown in those early days; and no land army could find subsistence in that dreary waste. Besides that, the country on its frontiers presented nothing inviting to invaders to make an attack: so that amidst the various conquests and revolutions of most other countries, this has remained nearly the same, unchanged, unconquered; its manners and modes of living little altered from what they were in the most distant ages. The Queen of Sheba came from Arabia, *the happy*, to visit King Solomon; and she presented to him gifts of the produce of the country, gold,

gold, spices, and precious stones.* The wise men who came from the east, to pay homage to the *child Jesus*,† came from this country, called ארץ קדם Arets Kedem, the land of the east, which lieth to the east and the south-east of Jerusalem; and they brought to him an offering of the treasures of Arabia, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. There were Arabians of the Jewish religion, at Jerusalem, who came to worship at the temple, on the day of Pentecost, and heard the apostles speaking in the Arabic language *the wonderful works of God*.‡— Saint Paul, after his conversion, travelled directly south from Damascus, and retired into Arabia, and opened here the doctrine of Christ, before he visited the apostles at Jerusalem, or appeared on the public theatre as a preacher to the Gentiles. Several of the tribes professed Christianity in the second and third centuries; and Jews and Christians occupied a considerable part of the country down to the time of Mahomet, or Mahommed. ||

* I. Kings. x.

† Matt. ii.

‡ Acts ii.

|| Mahomet signifies celebrated or laudable.

This memorable man was born, according to some authors, at Yathreb, a town not far from Medina ; but more probably, according to others, at Mecca, on the 5th of May, A.D. 570. His father Abdallah* followed the Pagan rites : his mother Amina was strictly Jewish. Mahomet, their only son, was a posthumous birth, and lost his mother too, when he was only two years old, whereby his education fell chiefly to the care and direction of an uncle. Nothing remarkable happened at his birth, that by the superstitious might be interpreted as an omen of his future greatness. He was descended from one of the chief of the Arabian tribes, and from the first family, the house of Hasken, in that tribe. His fortune was small, only a few camels, and a female slave. His education was that of the common sort, only such as might fit him for the ordinary duties of that country. The uncle, either not liking Mahomet, or not willing to be at the ex-

* Abdallah was the eleventh lineal descendant from Koreish, head of one of the principal tribes ; and Koreish was the nineteenth lineal descendant from Ishmael.

pence of keeping him longer, sold him at the age of sixteen years, to some trading Ishmaelites; who sold him again in open market, to Abdalmutalist, a rich merchant of Mecca. His master at first employed him in drudgery and servile offices; but observing his quick genius, and a capacity for business, he soon advanced him to higher employment, and made him his agent or factor in trade, and sent him with loaded camels of rich merchandize into Syria, Persia, Egypt, and other places. In this business Mahomet acquitted himself with so much judgment and fidelity, that he greatly increased his master's substance, and gained much esteem and reputation to himself. On the death of Abdalmutalist, Mahomet, by the comeliness of his person, an engaging address, and by the brightness of his parts, and perfect skill in his master's business, so far insinuated himself into the favour of his mistress, Cadijah, that she made him her husband; whereby he became possessed of all his master's wealth.

In his travels as a merchant, Mahomet, with a discerning eye, had observed the state
and

and condition of the several countries which he visited. From Persia he had nothing to fear. It not only lies at a great distance, but the intervening mountains and barren deserts rendered the march and subsistence of an army from that quarter impracticable. Besides that, Chosroes II. then King of Persia, was constantly engaged in war with Heraclius, Emperor of the Greeks, sometimes gaining and sometimes losing battles and provinces, particularly Syria and Palestine, and therefore could have no power or inclination to intermeddle with Arabia. Heraclius of course was equally engaged on his part, and could hardly support his own tottering empire: and Egypt, then a province to it, was sunk in luxury and effeminacy, wavering in her allegiance, dissatisfied with her subjection to a foreign power, and ready to join any leader that would hold out to her any shew of deliverance.

The religion of the Arabians at this time was Paganism, intermixed with Judaism and Christianity: but Christianity contaminated with superstition and fanaticism, and split into various sects and parties. The Nesto-

rian sect, which would not allow the Virgin Mary to be any longer called the mother of God, but the mother of Christ, and which therefore seems to have been charged with Arianism, by their enemies, the Eutychians, prevailed chiefly at this time in Arabia and Persia, and several other countries; and the two Metropolitan Bishops of Constantinople and Rome were violently contending for supremacy, and who should be esteemed the sovereign pontiff.

This state of things, religious and secular, presented to the mind of the acute and ambitious Mahomet, now set at ease from the engagements of trade and business, by the acquisition of his master's patrimony, a favourable opportunity of putting in execution the vast designs which he had for some time meditated, of establishing a new government, and a new religion among the Arabians, his countrymen. He called in the aid of religion, as necessary to carry on his political views; and, like Numa, and many other law-givers, to make his religious and legislative institutions more secure and respectable, he pretended to have a divine commu-

communication, and to hold converse with the angel Gabriel. And enthusiasm probably worked him up, so as to think he really had such a divine communication, or impulse.

Fergius, a Nestorian Monk, at this time had fled to Arabia, from the persecutions of that sect in Syria, and assisted Mahomet in forming a motley religion that should embrace all parties, Pagans, Jews, and Christians; and should adopt the excellencies, and reject the errors of all three. His grand principle that he set out with, was true, *that there is but one God*; and probably he was very sincere in his attempt to establish this principle, and to throw down idolatry, which then so much prevailed. This true principle, so agreeable to human reason, easily gained admittance with the wise and considerate, and became a proper basis for the erection of his religious superstructure.

In his fortieth year he announced himself a prophet of God, and gave out his symbolum, or the grand article of his creed, *there is but one God*. In some time he ventured
to

to add the other article, *that Mahomet is the great Apostle of God.*

We * cannot but admire the great sagacity and comprehension of this famous impostor, Mahomet, in laying the foundations of that mighty empire and extensive religion which he established. This extraordinary man perfectly understood the nature of the Arabian climate, the genius of the people, and the circumstances of the times, and conformably to these principles planned with great penetration and judgment both his civil and religious institutions.

The Arabians are a lively, active, spirited people, of good parts, warm passions, quick sensibility of constitution, much addicted to sensual pleasure and a voluptuous course of life. So indeed are the inhabitants of all dry elevated countries in warm climates. The neighbouring nations, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Persia, over which the Saracen empire and religion were extended with incredible celerity, partake very much of the

* *Note, here begins Dr. Alcock's Tract.*

Arabian character ; but breathing a more humid atmosphere, are more soft, luxurious, and effeminate.

The fundamental articles of Mahomet's religion are manifestly adapted and rendered subservient to his political interests ; being not only well adjusted to the character of the eastern nations, and to the genius of his government, but also judiciously contrived to quadrate as nearly as may be with the doctrines of all the other religions which then prevailed in those parts of the world, and to comprehend, as far as possible, the principal tenets of Christians, Jews, and Gentiles.

The chief doctrines and institutions of this great founder were the following :

He professed that there was only one God, the Creator and Governor of the Universe. That God had, in the early ages of the world, sent Moses, his first great prophet, to make known to mankind the will of their Creator, and to deliver to them his laws and ordinances as rules for their worship and conduct of life ; but that they were rejected
by

by the Gentiles, and very ill obeyed by the Jews themselves, to whom Moses was more particularly sent ; and that their wickedness and apostasy were the occasion of those miserable captivities and severe misfortunes which so frequently befell them. That the mission of Moses proving ineffectual, God had, in later times, sent Jesus, his second prophet, greater than Moses, and endowed with superior powers, to make such a full and perfect revelation of his will, laws, and worship, to the sinful world, as should clearly teach them the measure of their duty, both towards their Creator and towards one another ; which he was commanded to do with great gentleness, patience, and humility, and not to use any temporal force. That the mission of Jesus having met with no better reception nor success in the world than that of Moses, God had now sent Mahomet, his last and greatest prophet, with powers far superior to those which were given either to Moses or Jesus, being commissioned to promulge to the degenerate world his laws and decrees, (which he, like many other law-givers, pretended to have received by conversing with a spiritual being, the angel Gabriel)

briefly) not only by mild and peaceable means, but also to draw the sword, and by proper authority to enforce their obedience. That in order to this end, God had commanded his prophet Mahomet to establish a kingdom on earth; by the power of which kingdom, all those who should be refractory and unwilling to admit these divine institutions, were to be reduced to subjection, and by the force and violence of which all those who finally rejected them, as being the enemies of God and man,* and doomed to destruction, were to be totally cut off and exterminated.* But that God had appointed for those who obeyed his commands, and embraced the Mahometan laws and religion, the spoils and possessions of his and their conquered enemies as a reward in this life, and had provided for them, immediately after death, a paradise, consisting of all the most exquisite sensual pleasures and enjoy-

* Mussulman, in the Hebrew and Arabic languages, signifies *servatus*, preserved—and those only were to be preserved from destruction by the sword who would acknowledge this doctrine or symbolum, *Non est Deus nisi Deus, et Mahommed Apostolus ejus*, There is none other God but God, and Mahomet his Apostle.

ments that the heart of man could devise, or the imagination of the greatest voluptuary could suggest, with transcendent degrees of bliss to those who should lose their lives in the propagation and support of this divine system;* which should, in time, universally prevail over the whole world.

That the period of every man's life was invariably fixed and determined by the decrees of Heaven, and could not by any human power or foresight, nor by any accidents whatsoever, be either shortened or protracted.

That as drunkenness and excess depraved the faculties of the mind, and destroyed the health and vigor of the body, and was, for these reasons, a most odious vice in the sight of God, he was commanded strictly to prohibit the use of wine, and all strong fermented liquors.

The Koran was not given out in a body all at once, but was delivered in parts, some

† It is said in the Alcoran, whoever dies in battle is instantly admitted into the joys of paradise with the crown of martyrdom.

at one time, and some at another, as circumstances and events required, and as the policy of Mahomet dictated. These, after Mahomet's death, were collected together and formed into a book. And although the prophet had promised, in a former part of his laws, an indulgence in all sensual pleasures to his votaries in the next world, he thought fit, in a subsequent addition, to deny them one very desirable indulgence in this world, the use of wine; an indulgence very salutary when not excessive, and given by God as a cordial to make glad the heart of man. The use of a thing is not to be rejected altogether because some may abuse it; *for every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.** The prohibition of a moderate use of wine may justly be reckoned one principal cause, among several others, of the plague's being endemial in Egypt and other parts of the Turkish dominions. A moderate use of this liquor, which contains much vegetable acid, tends

* 1 Tim. iv. Lycurgus said, "shall we cut down
"our vines because of the intemperance of drunkards?"

to check that putrescent tendency of the blood and animal fluids which always accompanies the plague; for the plague is only a very high degree of putrid fever.

These doctrines and constitutions quite suit the climates, and are unquestionably well calculated to answer the purposes for which their author designed them.

1st. Mahomet enjoined strict temperance, and severely prohibited the use of wine and other intoxicating liquors. This was a wise institution. An indulgence to excess in strong fermented liquors, among a people of the temper and character of the Arabians and neighbouring nations, would have been pernicious both to health and discipline: it would have occasioned all the violences of inflamed passions, lust, jealousy, anger, revenge, revelling, drunkenness, and outrage, little inferior to madness, and rendered the people altogether ungovernable and untractable. This Mahomet found to his cost to be really the case. He did not forbid the use of wine till the experience of its ill consequences taught him the necessity of such a

pro-

prohibition: and this law is enforced with such particular severity in time of war, that drunkenness is then made a capital crime.

2dly. Predestination, although naturally hostile to industry and virtue, was a doctrine of no small importance in the Mahometan system, and very much contributed to the success of the great designs and undertakings of this enterprizing founder. He very artfully made use of it as an engine of state, to propagate and establish his kingdom on earth. This principle of fixed fate, or predestination, was exactly adapted to the character of the eastern nations, and particularly to Arabia, which Mahomet designed for the seat of his empire, as it has a tendency to inspire a people of their genius and temperament with an enthusiastic courage and resolution, and render them fearless of danger and regardless of death. If their fate be decreed, there can be no apprehension of danger in one place more than another. If they are to die in their beds, they cannot fall in the field; and if they must die in battle, they had better press forward in the engagement and do their best, since flight or shrinking

shrinking backward will not save them. It must, however, be owned, that the doctrine of predestination may sometimes produce a contrary effect, and instead of encouraging men to renew their efforts after defeat, may sink them into despair, and make them relinquish all farther attempts, as thinking their destiny is to be conquered; whereas, when brave men are persuaded that success depends upon their own exertions, and that by perseverance they may still gain the ascendant; they are then so far from tamely ceding to evils, that they the more courageously bear up against them; according to the poet,

Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito.

Virg. Æn. v.

Mahomet believed in predestination, and this might render him so courageous in battle, and after many defeats, and when his cause seemed desperate, still resolute to renew his attacks, and either conquer or die. Enthusiasm may cause a man to deceive himself, and take his own fancies or conceptions for divine suggestions. This probably was the

the case with Mahomet, and the success of his enterprizes might still further persuade him that his cause was the cause of God. Many other enthusiasts have thus deceived themselves. Oliver Cromwell was a very great enthusiast, and, I doubt not, really believed many of his divine illuminations and consultations with the Lord, although they might often be hypocritical, and made use of as a cloak to cover his worldly views.

3. Mahomet made a wise use of those great instruments of conquest, and sanctions of government, rewards and punishments. A judicious display and management of such operative principles could not fail of having an extraordinary influence on a people naturally susceptible of very strong impressions from the passions of hope and fear. He promised to those who engaged in his cause, which he made, and probably believed to be, the cause of God, ample compensation in this life, the spoils and possessions of all their conquered enemies, and as an increase of domestic happiness, indulged

indulged them in bigamy, which Jesus had condemned.*

And he also held forth to them a paradise, or future state of happiness after death; which he supposed to consist, not in frigid contemplation and intellectual or mental enjoyments, but in all kinds of sensual pleasures, especially those of beautiful young women, newly created for the gratification of their carnal appetites. But destruction and eternal damnation were denounced to be the portion of those who opposed and rejected his divine dispensations.

This sort of paradise was a well-contrived scheme to allure and captivate the voluptuous inhabitants of the eastern nations of which we are speaking, whose warm passions and quick feelings gave them so great a propensity to every species of luxury.

4thly. To these civil and military operations this politic founder added a strong

* Montesquieu says, the Mahometans will never be converted to Christianity, on account of the prohibition of a plurality of wives.

infusion of religion. This proved very subservient to his ambitious views. Such a combination naturally begets, especially in these eastern climates, a violent spirit of enthusiasm. With this enthusiastic spirit, which operates unaccountably, and produces a kind of supernatural courage, the people under our consideration were powerfully actuated.

These principles, with the particular circumstances of the times, of which Mahomet fully availed himself, strongly co-operated to produce the extraordinary effects which we are here considering.

1st. The Jews, after the almost total destruction and ruin of their country and nation in the time of Adrian, the Roman emperor, were exposed to extreme hardship and misery. Great numbers of them, to avoid the calamities with which they were every where surrounded in their native country, fled for refuge from their implacable enemies into Arabia and Egypt, and dispersed themselves through those provinces.

E

Adrian,

Adrian, bent upon the extermination of this people, transported all that could be found of those who still remained in Judea into Spain and other countries. Mahomet greatly reconciled the Jews to his system, by acknowledging the divine authority of Moses, by adopting circumcision, and by professing the unity of the Godhead, which they pretended could not be found, or was lost in the Trinity of the Christians.

It is not, therefore, very surprising, that many of the Jews, thus circumstanced, should be induced to make easy transitions to Mahometanism, which contained or allowed the principal doctrines of their own religion, and at the same time made them offers the most inviting to a people of their character and situation; offers of conquest and revenge on their enemies, and of wealth, power, pleasure, and every sensual gratification to themselves.

2dly. Christianity, at this time, was unhappily divided into various sects and parties, which treated one another with violent animosity. Many Christian provinces of the

the east were deeply infected and over-run with Arianism, and what is now called Socinianism, which expressly or virtually denied the divinity of Jesus, his pre-existence before his incarnation, and only allowed his prophetic office of a divine teacher.

Image worship and the adoration of saints and relics now began to prevail, and those Christians that refused to join in this Pagan worship, and to admit the use of images in their churches, were terribly harassed and persecuted, both by the Greek or Eastern, and by the Western or Roman Church.

The Saracen or Mahometan tenets and doctrines were well suited for an accommodation with both these persecuted sects, as that religion admitted the divine mission of Jesus, and condemned the idolatrous use of images and worship of saints. Many of the eastern Christians then under these circumstances, and out of regard to their own safety, were seduced to comply with the prevalent new system, which in several important articles so nearly quadrated with their own principles, and which in others

was so well calculated to flatter their natural propensity to luxury and sensuality, the distinguishing character of the inhabitants of these climates.

3dly. Paganism was at this time a very declining profession. The heathen gods, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Bacchus, &c. were known to be examples of the foulest immorality. The Pagan idolatries, sacrifices, oracles, auguries, and other absurdities, were generally held in derision and contempt; and the Pagans or Gentiles themselves, being given up to a life of effeminacy and pleasure, interested themselves very little about their decayed and despised religion. Many of these people, therefore, finding the old Pagan tenet of fatalism or predestination contained in the Mahometan scheme, and the general voluptuous tenor of that religion, in other respects, admirably adapted to their own temper and character, made no great difficulty of becoming converts to it.

4thly. The weak declining state of the old Roman empire, which, after the translation of the imperial seat to Constantinople, was

denominated the Greek, made easy way for the rise of the Mahometan. Shattered and broken as that empire was in her constitution, and almost exhausted of her vital strength by the furious incursions and invasions from time to time made by the Goths and Vandals, she could scarcely support herself for a while longer against the violent attacks of those northern barbarians, and of Persia to the east; much less was she able to make head against the rising power of the Saracens, her formidable new enemies from the southern regions, who, with an irresistible force, and incredibly rapid progress, were spreading conquest, wonder, and terror, to the east and west.

If we duly weigh the collective force of all the particulars here briefly sketched, relating to the Mahometan constitutions, and to the circumstances of the times, we may, perhaps, be able to form some satisfactory idea of the natural causes, and consequently view with less astonishment the sudden rise and propagation of the Saracen religion and empire; which, in a short time, spread like an inundation over all Arabia, Egypt, the
North,

North, Africa, Syria, and Persia; with a flaming sword destroying and laying waste whatever opposed its progress, equally exterminating Christianity, Jewism, and Paganism.

Mahomet and his followers pleaded the success of their enterprises, and extension of their religion and government, as a proof that it was the work of God. But we should be cautious of ascribing to the supernatural interposition of the Deity, what may thus fairly be accounted for by human means, by the regular operation of natural causes and effects.

4 AP 65

THE END.

